

Isaac's Legacy

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Summary: After stopping the Grave Eclipse and defeating the Tuaparang, Matthew returned to the Goma Plateau in high spirits. However, the growing wedge between he and his father has him worried that he's let his victory get to his head.

***Chapter 1*: Isaac's Legacy**

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Isaac's Legacy

Matthew collapsed on his bed, exhausted from a long day of training. He'd pulled off his shirt already, which he tossed carelessly in the corner of his bedroom. He knew he was drenched in sweat, and was probably going to leave dampness on his sheets, but he was just honestly too worn out to care. His father was a kind man, but a tough trainer.

Several weeks had passed since Matthew and his companions had ended the Grave Eclipse and defeated the Tuaparang. The battles had been intense, but the young man had been ready for them - all those years of training under his father and Gareth had paid off. In fact, it had almost been second nature to him. Almost as though he'd done it all before.

Matthew had been on cloud nine since then. There was honestly no kind of satisfaction to rival that of the knowledge that you had saved the world. Not single handedly, of course - but to have led the team that did it. The young Venus Adept cracked a smile. If only he had some way of proving it. He'd never have problems picking up girls again.

He closed his eyes and let his thoughts drift like leaves on water. Speaking of girls, it was hard not to notice the female absence of the Lookout Cabin. Karis had gone back to Kalay with the Roc Feather, presumably to build another Soarwing with her father. Ever since she'd left, Isaac and Gareth had

been training their sons even more vigorously than before. Matthew wasn't sure why. Perhaps the Grave Eclipse had spooked them, or maybe they figured their sons were still not yet ready for whatever lay in Sol Sanctum. Matthew figured that was their next step, once the new

Soarwing was finished. They might have already gone there, had Tyrell not broken the one they had in the first place.

Sol Sanctum... What crushing challenges would await them in that ancient place?

Matthew sighed. The life of an adventurer was fun at times, and exciting at others, but there were also moments when the truth of the matter settled in, and he realized that his family was truly responsible for the fate of the world. As cool as saving the world had been, he just couldn't help but wish at times that it was somebody else's job.

Perhaps his father was training him so hard now because he himself had grown weary of the responsibility. Isaac was in his mid-forties - the energy of Mars Lighthouse had gifted him with the body of someone half his age, but no amount of alchemic sorcery could relieve the psychological aging. His father was so often enthusiastic and sprightly, but occasionally his eyes would betray him, revealing to any who were lucky enough to glimpse it the weight of one who had to guide the fate of millions.

To Matthew and his friends, stopping the Grave Eclipse had been a victory, but to everyone else the event could not have been so easily forgotten. An approximate body count still had yet to surface, nor would it for some time yet. Angara had been dealt a crushing blow.

And Isaac considered himself personally responsible for the lives of all those people. To the Warriors of Vale, the Eclipse

must have come out of nowhere, catching them completely off guard. After thirty years of careful anticipation, their attention had been entirely on Mt. Aleph and the Psynergy Vortexes. They hadn't even realized Alex still lived, nor had they any knowledge of the Tuaparang. The Grave Eclipse had been one massive sucker punch, of such proportions that it had effectively crippled an entire continent.

Matthew chastised himself for not realizing all this sooner. No wonder his father was training him so hard. They had been sent out to find a feather, and had returned having helped wipe out a third of Angara's population. He had no right to consider this a victory in any way.

Duty truly was heavier than a mountain.

So what could Matthew do now? His life revolved around training now. Until Karis returned with the repaired Soarwing, there was honestly nothing they could do but hone their skills.

Matthew sat up, cradling his head. He'd been such a fool for not realizing these things sooner. No wonder Isaac had been so somber and withdrawn since he'd returned. He must have thought his son a fool to return from the eclipse with a triumphant grin.

He had a long way to go before he was anywhere near the warrior his father was. Isaac would not have been so easily manipulated. Isaac would not have accidentally assisted in an apocalypse. Isaac would not have ran off to Champa to have weapons forged while the a world-affecting cataclysm was in progress.

Matthew needed to be more like Isaac.

He stood up and pulled his shirt back on. He needed to have a long talk with his father. There was much growing up the young Venus Adept still needed to do. Isaac would guide him. Under his father's tutelage, he could be a greater hero. Something like the Grave Eclipse would not happen again, so long as he had even a chance to prevent it.

Matthew raced down the stairs and found his father at his study, stacks of papers before him. He sat hunched over, too upright to be asleep, but too hunched over to be comfortable. A half empty bottle rested within arm's reach, most likely housing some rum or ale. Such was a typical sight.

Matthew reached the end of the stairs and went to his father's side. He stood as tall as he could, with the most mature face his young mug could muster. He was ready for whatever the conversation ahead had in store.

"We need to talk."

Matthew blinked. The words had been right on his tongue, but it had been Isaac who had spoken them. "Yeah, sure. That's what I came down here for actually."

Isaac seemed surprised to hear that. "Oh, really? Well, you go first then, if you have something on your mind. We'll get to my news after. It's rather serious."

Matthew thought about his epiphany. How best to sum it up? "Well, I was just thinking... A lot of people died in the Eclipse, and here I am acting like I'm all cool and stuff. And it must be hard to be you, and stopping the Eclipse wasn't a victory... since it shouldn't have happened in the first place... So I should take my training more seriously..." The whole thing came out awkwardly and unsteady. Perhaps he should have rehearsed his speech before racing downstairs.

Isaac held his gaze for a while, taking in what his son had said. His hand reached up to scratch his beard - a sign that he was unsure of something. "You're uh... worried you aren't being humble about saving the world?"

Matthew nodded shamefully. "I was just thinking about it. I've been kind of full of it since I got back. I shouldn't really be acting like a big-shot. A lot of people died in the Eclipse, and if we hadn't been so naïve about the Tuaparang, they wouldn't have..."

Isaac sighed and sat back in his chair, his hands behind his head. He didn't seem to know what to say. Clearly, this wasn't the topic he'd been expected.

"You still stopped the Eclipse though, right?" His father replied. "I honestly wouldn't worry about letting it get to your head. You should have seen what I was like after Mars Lighthouse. I was a real class act tool. Gods, I went on and on about how awesome I was. I picked up tons of chicks, but my friends hated me. They ended up having to have a damn intervention to get me back to my normal self. Thankfully, you're handling this much better than I did. I haven't really noticed a huge change in your personality, so I don't really think you have a problem here."

Matthew took an unconscious step back, scratching the back of his head nervously. He hadn't expected to hear that at all. His stoic father acting like a tool at his age? Such news was shocking to the young Adept. Hopefully there would be no more shocking revelations that day...

"So that brings us to my news..." Isaac said hesitantly. "You might want to take a seat for this."

Matthew did so.

Isaac cleared his throat. "It's, uh... It's about your mother."

The color drained from Matthew's face. "Mom?! What happened? Is she alright?!"

Isaac hushed him with a wave of his hands. "She's fine. Nothing's happened, she's still safe in Kalay. And that's the thing, see... It has to do why she's there and not here."

Matthew's ears would have perked up, were he Sveta.

"Are you finally going to tell me what's going on with that? You guys aren't splitting up are you? Or is she sick or something? Is that why she had to stay in Kalay?"

Isaac practically grimaced, so hesitant was he to continue the conversation. Then out of nowhere, a whole spiel of words came out like a floodgate. "She's just tired of pretending, you know? She always preferred Piers as it was, and we just can't seem to connect... her and I..."

"Huh?" Matthew asked, trying to piece together what his father had just said. "What are you saying?"

Isaac took a deep breath to steady himself. "I'm sorry, Matt. Jenna's not your mother. She never was."

Matthew rose to his feet. "What are you saying?! How can she not be my mother? I've known her my whole life! She raised me up from a child! She's called me son a thousand times!"

Isaac bowed his head. "I'm sorry, son. But Jenna... you needed a mother and she can't conceive. At first she was excited about the idea, but as time passed, she grew tired of us. Well, more me than you. She still loves you, but she absolutely hates me now. Mostly because of me not telling

you the truth about your birth. But there were other reasons, too."

Matthew's mind was reeling. In just a few moments, his entire life had changed completely. He was struggling to piece together his thoughts. One in particular grabbed his attention, and he had to ask.

"If Jenna isn't my mother... then who is?"

Isaac couldn't meet his gaze at this point. "This next part is... rather shocking... I'll tell you, but... Oh, I'm sorry, son."

Dear gods, what could be worse than this...?

"There is no mother."

...

"...huh?"

Isaac sighed, his eyes glued to the floor. "There was no mother. You were conceived entirely through my DNA. I carried you and I gave birth to you. All on my own... without a woman."

Matthew simply stood there, his jaw hanging open in disbelief. He couldn't believe what he was hearing. Surely this had to be some sort of cruel joke.

But the shame on Isaac's face was no liar. He was telling the truth. The sick, cold, horrifying truth.

"How is that even possible? How can a man become pregnant in the first place, much less give birth to a child that only has his DNA? What does that even make me, then?!"

"...A clone, if you want to get technical..."

Matthew was going to be sick. He didn't want to hear anymore, he just wanted to run far away and take a very long shower... But in spite of himself, he just had to know. One could not simply hear something like this and turn away.

"How... how did you do it?"

"Alchemy, mainly. Sperm cells were needed, followed by augmentation of my internal organs to facilitate the development of a child. Close attention had to be paid during the pregnancy, especially during the third trimester."

"Ugh, you sound like Kraden."

"Oh, he helped a lot. In fact, the entire project only succeeded thanks to his extensive research. I was honestly surprised by how interested he was in the whole thing. He even insisted on witnessing the birth."

Horrible images wedged their way into Matthew's mind. It was likely the only thing keeping him sane at this point was his infernal need to understand exactly how this macabre affair worked.

"How did the birth wor- No! No, don't tell me! For the love of all things holy, stop talking about this!" But the damage was already done. Try as he might to avoid thinking about it, his mind had already put two and two together and poor Matthew was forever scarred by the horrifying image of Kraden assisting a naked Isaac in giving ass-birth to his clone child.

His fath- No, his *template*, had shrank back into the chair as though to hide from him. And with good reason. Matthew

was seriously considering resorting to violence, so distressed was his scarred, confused mind.

Matthew paced the room for several minutes, trying to process what he'd just learned. He scoffed at the idea of the more naïve person he'd been only a few minutes - who had thought the idea of a wild young Isaac was traumatizing.

"One final question." Matthew said, turning to Isaac. "Why? For the love of the gods, why...?!"

"The world needed to be protected." Isaac said simply. "I could think of nobody better to protect it than myself. But I knew I wouldn't live forever. A legitimate child could turn out to be a girl or a weakling. And taking on a pupil never works, they always turn evil. So I knew I had to extend my legacy, the only way I could. And look what's come of it! You're just like me in my prime! And you already saved the world once!"

"Well, guess what, *Isaac*?" Matthew said. "You'd better hope that endless youth of yours holds out, because you can take care of Weyard by yourself from now on! I'm outta here."

Matthew made for the door. Isaac rose, pleading with him to stay.

"Matthew, please wait! You can't go now! Where are you even going to go?"

"Kalay." Matthew shot back. "I'll go live with Jenna and Ivan. She might not be my biological mother, but she still loves me. And I know Ivan's cool. He used to sneak me booze. Anyway, have fun with Sol Sanctum, and the Mourning Moon, and the Tuaparang, and Alex, and whatever other nonsense you've got going on. I'm done with this whole perverse thing."

Matthew reached for the door, but it swung open before he could touch the handle. And through the threshold stepped in Gareth and Tyrell, both sweaty from their long training session and sporting matching grins. He stared at the two Mars Adepts for a moment, the gears clicking in his brain. He then turned back at Isaac, a scowl on his face.

Isaac hesitated for a moment, then conceded with a sad nod.

"Ugh, this is disgusting!" Matthew exclaimed, pushing past the Mars Adepts and taking off at a run. Gareth looked to Isaac for answers.

"I told him." Isaac sighed, before turning and collapsing back on the desk of his study.

Gareth, realizing what he meant, broke out into a wide grin. He stepped outside, and cupped his hands around his mouth so the fleeing Matthew could hear his shout.

"You think we're bad?! Mia had twins!"

True to his word, Matthew fled to Kalay. Jenna accepted her traumatized adopted son with open arms. Matthew took up residence at the palace, where he met Ivan's lovely wife. The boy then developed a whole new appreciation for their daughter.

Several weeks later, Kraden got a letter from Isaac.

I told him, Kraden. He didn't react very well. I don't think he'll be helping us anymore. You need to get over here quickly. We only have to hurry up and make another one.

The alchemy sage grinned.

The End?